

CELEBRATING THE LIFE, LEGACY
AND WORK OF REVEREND DR.
JAMES E. GUNTHER

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 19, 2015

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, today I rise today to recognize and honor the life of Reverend Dr. James E. Gunther, the well respected Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, ecumenist and an elder among African American Lutheran Pastors. I am honored to acknowledge the life and contributions of one of Harlem's forward thinking religious leaders of the 21st century.

On June 20th, at Harlem's historic Transfiguration Lutheran Church, the Harlem community gathers to memorialize Dr. Gunther. He devoted his life to enlightening African Americans and is noted for illuminating our spiritual enlargement to embrace a global unification and cultural learning.

Reverend Dr. James E. Gunther served the Harlem community and was a man of purpose, passion and true conviction in service to others. Known as a "Poor, Humble, Parish priest, he served for a brief time at Nativity Lutheran Church and Tabernacle Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, as part of the Center City Lutheran Parish, before moving on to Transfiguration Lutheran Church in Harlem where he served for 38 years, retiring in 1998. A year later he was named Pastor Emeritus.

A life-long teacher, leader and visionary, he led a large parish with many Caribbean roots at the Transfiguration Lutheran Church. He was a member of the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) representing the Lutheran Church of America (LCA). A Humanitarian, he served as a Board member of the National Committee of Black Churchmen. Focusing on Economic Justice Working Group, the Division of Overseas Ministry and the Committee on Research and Planning, he served as a Board member of the National Committee of Black Churchmen.

Through Reverend Gunther, illustrious leadership, he founded and chaired the Harlem College Assistance Project from 1964–1977 sending more than 5,000 young black and Hispanic students to college. An inspiring thought leader, he served on the Harlem Urban Development Corporation, the Board of the Roosevelt Island Corporation, the New York Urban Coalition and the Ministerial Interfaith Association.

A man way ahead of his time, Dr. Gunther, was born on May 5, 1932 in Philadelphia, PA. Educated in Philadelphia Public Schools, he continued his collegiate journey attending the University of Pennsylvania. He holds degrees from Philadelphia College of the Bible, Houghton College, the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, and Harvard University with studies in Psychology, Religion, Theology and Church and Society.

A worldwide global vanguard, Dr. Gunther served on the Executive council of the LCA and represented the church at the 1977 Sixth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Dar es Salaam, East Africa, working on the Statement Human Rights and the Statement on South Africa. Dr. Gunther encouraged all that he met "To Think Globally While Acting Locally".

In addition, Dr. Gunther served as Trustee of Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, PA; Wagner College, Staten Island, NY and Muhlenberg University, Allentown, PA. He subsequently served as a Board Member of Augsburg Fortress Publishers, an Adjunct Professor at Christ Bible College, Malcolm King College (associated with Fordham University and Marymount-Manhattan College, and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and my distinguished colleagues join me in recognizing Reverend Dr. James E. Gunther, and his contributions and innovations that have positively impacted the quality of life for countless citizens across this Nation. His unwavering dedication, commitment, and spiritual guidance is worthy of our Nation's highest esteem.

INTRODUCTION OF THE "KEEP OUR PENSION PROMISES ACT"

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 19, 2015

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the "Keep Our Pension Promises Act."

Pensions are one of the surest means to afford millions of middle class families an opportunity for security in retirement, to enjoy their golden years without being afraid that they haven't saved enough money or what they have saved could run out. Pensions guarantee our senior citizens will know they have a check arriving every month for as long as they live. This is true retirement security.

For forty years the federal pension law has ensured that retirees are given the highest level of protection. For forty years, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, or ERISA, controlled that pension benefits in multiemployer plans should be cut only when a plan runs out of money—and even then, the benefits of retirees should be the last to be cut. This has held true and true because it was the right thing to do. Retirees worked their entire life to earn the promise and benefit of a guaranteed pension.

This was all uprooted by Congress' December vote on the Omnibus funding bill. A provision that was stuck into the 1,600 page Omnibus bill, at the last minute, forced a decision between shutting down the government and cutting retiree's pension benefits for the first time ever.

An estimated 1 million participants, including retirees, are in multi-employer pension plans that federal officials say are in danger of running out of money in the near future. The provision Congress passed allowed for the first time for the benefits of current retirees to be cut as part of a deal to address the fiscal distress confronting some of the nation's multi-employer pension plans, having a direct impact on 1.5 million American retirees.

This was wrong and today I introduce the "Keep Our Pension Promises Act" with Senator BERNIE SANDERS of Vermont, to correct this short sighted effort.

This Act corrects the injustices bestowed upon our most vulnerable retirees by restoring anti-cutback rules so that retirees in financially troubled multi-employer pension plans are protected from having their earned benefits cut.

It will allow plans to partition off "orphaned" participants into a separate plan, giving participating employers relief from having to shoulder the full financial burden and risk of underfunded "orphaned" participants—ensuring the ability for plans to become financially secure once more.

Recognizing that funding is the ultimate concern, the act shores up the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp and creates a legacy fund to ensure participants in partitioned plans will continue to receive the benefits they depend upon. The costs to create this fund are covered by closing tax loopholes the very wealthy use to accumulate expensive artwork and avoid estate and gift taxes.

Further the bill ensures pension obligations are prioritized during bankruptcies, which will help the remaining employers in the plan by making it less likely they become responsible for underfunded orphan plans.

Our pension system has allowed our senior citizens the opportunity to enjoy their years of hard work in retirement and receive the payouts they spent a life time to earn. This effort recognizes that shared sacrifices are the appropriate course of action to address weakness in pension plans. I encourage my colleagues to support this measure and correct the misguided action passed in last year's Omnibus funding bill.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF SHARON, MASSACHUSETTS

HON. WILLIAM R. KEATING

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 19, 2015

Mr. KEATING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of Sharon, Massachusetts, a town whose slogan "A Better Place to Live Because It's Naturally Beautiful" is uncontested. Sharon's landscape represents a classic New England destination with its tree-lined streets, pristine white church spires encasing bells manufactured by Paul Revere, its forested high plains and the peacefulness of Lake Massapoag.

First settled in 1637 as part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Sharon was established as the 2nd precinct of its neighboring town Stoughton in 1740. On June 21, 1765, an act passed by the Council and the House of Representatives and signed by Governor Bernard incorporated the second precinct of Stoughton into the district named Stoughtonham. It was subsequently named after the Sharon plains in Israel due to its plentiful forests and greenery. Engrained in the history of Sharon is the strength of its townspeople who manufactured weapons for the Continental Army during the American Revolution. The heroism of the colonial townspeople of Sharon is exemplified by the historical figure Deborah Sampson, a woman who disguised herself as a man in order to display her patriotism by fighting for her country in the Revolutionary War.

Present day Sharon has become a beacon for its thriving culture. Local artists and businesses have contributed to the unique character of this charming Massachusetts town.

A boisterous population of 18,000 individuals inhabit Sharon, providing the town with